MINISTERS AND PEOPLE IN Christendom,

And else-where:

To Turn from the Persecuting Mind, that Destroyes Peoples Bodies and Estates for not Conforming to your Religion and Worship.

And that you may Receive the Mind of Christ, as the Apostles did, who came to Save Mens Lives, and not to destroy them; and to Rebuke them that would destroy Mens Lives and Estates.

By George Fox.

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This is an Epistle for all Professions & Professors, that be called *Christians* and others, to Read and Consider, and Measure & Weigh themselves by, and try Who they are like, and Whose Path and Steps they tread in.

YOu do not read in the Old World that either *Adam*, *Seth*, *Enoch*, or any of those famous Fathers, that did succeed each other unto *Noah*, did force or compel any to their Religion or Way of Worshipping God; though its said, *Noah was grieved with the Unrighteous Conversation of the old World, who grieved God and his Spirit which strove with them*; but it doth not say, it strove with them, with *Carnal Weapons*, or *Goals*, or *Imprisonments*.

And though *Noah* was a Preacher of Righteousness, we do not read he forc't or compelled any, or had any such Command from God.

And after the Lord God had destroyed the old ungodly World, for their Ungodliness; who grieved him and his Spirit.

So their destruction came by resisting the Spirit of the Lord, and going from it into Ungodliness; and God was Just in overthrowing of them, whose Spirit had striven with them long, who saved Just *Noah*.

And after that he had destroyed the old World, and saved *Noah* and his Family; we do not read that ever either *Noah*,

or

or any of them that ſucceeded him, unto *Abraham*, did Force or Compel any to their Religion, or the worſhiping of their God.

And alſo *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, that did ſucceed each other; we never read that they did Compel or Force any to ſerve or worſhip God, or compel them to their Wayes.

And after, when the Children of *Iſrael* went into *Egypt*, we do not read that *Pharoah* did compel them to his Religion or Worſhip, though he did Oppreſs them ſeveral wayes.

And when the Lord ſent *Moſes* to call them out of *Egypt*, *Pharoah* and *Jannes*, and *Jambres* withſtood *Moſes* and *Aaron*, and reſiſted *Moſes*; yet we do not read they offered to compel them to their Religion, and Worſhip and the *Egyptians* Church; but they compelled them to Work.

And we do not read that *Abraham* or *Iſaac*, when they went into *Egypt*, or *Abimelech's* Country, that either *Pharoah* or *Abimelech*, did compel them to conform to their Religion, Way, and Worſhip.

And likewiſe *Lot*, who ſojourned in *Sodom*, we do not read that he Compelled any to his Way or Religion, or that the *Sodomites* compelled him to their Way; though he was vexed with their filthy Converſation.

And likewiſe when the Children of *Iſrael* came out of *Egypt*, and received the Law of God; they did not compel or force other Nations to ſerve their God; but other Nations came to them, and when their Males were Circumciſed, they might eat of their Sacrifice.

So look all along from *Moſes* to *Joſhua*, and the Judges, and all the Prophets, and the Kings, where ever ye can find that they did compel any Nation, to ſerve and Worſhip their God.

Now the *Jews*, when they were taken Captive, we read that *Nebuchadnezar* compelled them: But the *Jews* diſtinguiſhed what Sacrifices they were to offer, and what not, and what was called Holy, and what Unholy.

But you do not read that they forc't other Nations, to offer a Sacrifice to God upon his Altar by their Law, and Impriſon them, and ſpoil their Goods if they would not, or that they forc't

forſc't other Nations to come and Worſhip in their Temple, or did force them to bring in their Tythes, or yearly Offerings; though they took Tax or Tribute of them.

And we ſee after the Kings in *Maccabes*, how ſeveral of the *Iews* ſuffered by the *Heathen*, becauſe they would not conform to their Worſhip: But we do not read that the *Iews* compelled other Nations to come to their Worſhip, after they had Conquered them, and made them Tributaryes.

Neither do we read, that ever any of the high Prieſts or *Levi* did caſt any into Priſon, becauſe they did not bring in their Tythes into the Store-houſes, but it was a Curſe that remained upon them, as in *Malachi*, if they did not.

And after Chriſt came and ſent forth his Diſciples amongſt the *Iews*, and bid them not go in the way of the *Gentiles*, and told them, when he gave them their Commiſſion, and ſent them out to preach the Goſpel, *freely you have received, freely give.*

But he ſaid unto them, *Whatſoever they ſet before you that, eate; for the Work man is worthy of his Meat*, &c.

Now, they did not compel any to hear them, nor to give them Meat.

And Chriſt did not compel any to hear him, or any to Communicate to him; who is the Lord and Maſter.

And after Chriſt was riſen, who gave a larger Commiſſion to his Diſciples, and bid them go into all Nations, and preach the Goſpel: Chriſt who had died for all Men, and was a propitiation for the Sins of the whole World, after he had dyed and was riſen, bids them go into all Nations, *and Preach the Goſpel to every Creature.*

Now, theſe Apoſtles and Ambaſſadours, were not to compel any to hear them, or to give them Maintenance; and if they would not hear them, nor ſet before them meat: Chriſt gave them no ſuch Commiſſion to caſt them in Priſon, and compel them to give them Maintenance; but Chriſt ſaid unto them, *He that believeth is ſaved, and he that doth not is condemned already.* And that was puniſhment enough to them that would not receive their Meſſage.

And they that received them received him that ſent them, and they that received a Prophet, received a Prophet's reward.

And they that would not receive them, they ſhould ſhake off the duſt of their Feet as a witneſs againſt them; and that was puniſhment enough.

And if any would not hear his Brother, as concerning practiſe in the Church, he might take one or two more of the Church, and if he would not hear them, then they were to tell it to the Church; and if he would not hear the Church, then he ſhould be to them as a Heathen, and as a Publican: And ſo was cut off from being a Member of Chriſt's heavenly Body, he being the heavenly Head; and that was puniſhment enough, they did not caſt them into Priſon.

And Chriſt told his Diſciples, when he did ſend them forth as Sheep amongſt Wolves, (ſo the Nations that were ſettled in their own way and Religions, were like Wolves to them) Chriſt told his Diſciples. *They ſhould be brought before Kings and Rulers, and haled before Magiſtrates, and put out of their Synagogues, and Whipt and Scourged for his Names ſake.*

And you may conſider, that theſe were either *Heathens* or *Jews*, that were theſe Whippers, and Scourgers, and Perſecutors.

But Chriſt bid his Diſciples take no thought what to ſay, when they were brought before them, for it was the Spirit of the Father that ſpoke in them, and it ſhould be given unto them at that preſent hour.

So theſe Diſciples of Chriſt were not to ſtudy before hand, what to preach and ſay to the Kings, Rulers, and Magiſtrates, when they were brought before them.

Now theſe *Heathens* and *Jews*, did Whip, Scourge, and Impriſon Chriſt and his Diſciples; and they bore it patiently.

But where did ever Chriſt or his Diſciples, whip, ſcourge, or Impriſon any, or the true Church in the Apoſtles Dayes, for not hearing of them, and not giving them Maintenance, or ſpoiled their Goods?

But the true Chriſtians ſuffered the ſpoiling of their Goods,

as

as the Apoſtle ſpeaks of to the *Hebrews*, that were the hearers of Chriſt, who told them, *That God had ſpoken to their Fathers by the Prophets*, but now in theſe laſt dayes, he had ſpoken unto us by his Son, *&c.*

So mark, God had ſpoken to us, that is, his Church, by his Son, who is the Head of it.

For God was in Chriſt reconciling the World unto himſelf, who was the firſt ſpeaker to *Adam* and *Eve* in Paradiſe, and was the ſpeaker again to them that heard, and believed in his Son, and is now.

And now theſe Chriſtians that God was their Speaker unto, by his Son, which ſuffered the ſpoiling of their Goods joyfully, and were Gazing-ſtocks: Now they that gazed at them, and that had ſpoiled their Goods, were the *Jews*, and the *Gentiles*, that followed their old Profeſſions, and their Wayes.

Yet theſe true Chriſtians that heard the Son, we do not read that they ſpoiled either *Jews* or *Gentiles* Goods, or made them Gazingſtocks.

For *John* the Divine ſaith in his *Revelations*, *that the Beaſt compelled all both ſmall and great to Worſhip him, and to receive his Mark.*

So we do not read that Chriſt, or *John*, or the Apoſtles, compelled any; but the Beaſt.

And he ſaith, *That the Beaſt that did Compel, received his Power from the Dragon*; ſo did not receive it from God and Chriſt.

And he ſaith, *All worſhipped the Beaſt, but who had their Names written in the Lamb's Book of Life, before the Foundation of the World.*

And therefore let all that go under the name of Chriſtians and *Jews*, conſider this; and others that make a Profeſſion of God and Chriſt, conſider theſe things, and lay them to Heart, and do unto all Men, as you would have them do unto you; for you would not have another Man compel you to that Religion which is contrary to yours, and therefore do not you ſo unto them; but mind the Royal Law of Liberty, which Law is holy, juſt, pure, good, and Righteous, and anſwers

that of God in all, and gives Liberty to the Spirit of God in all.

And does not the Apoſtle tell you, *Every Man muſt ſtand and fall to their own Maſter*? So the Apoſtle gave liberty here, that every one muſt ſtand or fall to him that was their Maſter; for he that was Servant of Sin committed it, and the wages of it was Death, and he that was the Servant of God unto Righteouſneſs, and the Fruits unto holyneſs, and their end everlaſting Life.

And does not the Apoſtle ſay, *that Chriſt was the Author and finiſher of Faith, and whatſoever was not of Faith is Sin*? And therefore muſt not all be left to their Faith, which Chriſt is the Author of? and the Myſtery of Faith is held in a pure Conſcience, then muſt not their Conſciences be free for Chriſt, and at liberty for the Myſtery of Faith which is held in it, which Faith Chriſt the ſpiritual and heavenly Man, is the Author and finiſher of, who was Perſecuted by the *Jews*, and they delivered him to the *Gentiles*.

So, ſee what liberty he had amongſt them, who ſuffered the contradictions of Sinners.

And Chriſt was Buffetted, and Spit upon, and Strucken, and Smitten, and Mockt, and a Crown of Thornes put on his Head, and reviled and blaſphemed, yet did he not revenge himſelf, who had all Power in Heaven and in Earth given unto him; did he or his Diſciples whip, buffet, ſcourge or Impriſon, or Crown any with Thornes? but preacht and proffered unto them the Crown of Life, and of Glory.

And ſo follow ye Chriſt and the Apoſtles Examples, both in Life, Practice and Doctrine; which is every true Chriſtian's duty.

And doth not the Apoſtle ſay, *That they had not Power over any man's Faith, but Jeſus Chriſt was the Author and finiſher of it, and in it they were to have their liberty, and what was not of Faith was Sin*?

So they did not ſay, they had Power to make them believe this or that, or to force them to a Faith; but they were to look unto Jeſus the Author and finiſher of their Faith; and God opened *Lydias'* Heart, and ſhe believed. So

So the Heart must be opened by the Lord, if they be true-believers, by his Light and Spirit

And the Gospel which is preached to every Creature, which is the Power of God; are not all to have their liberty in this Gospel, which Gospel was sent from Heaven by the Holy Ghost?

So in this Gospel are not all to have their liberty in the Power of God?

And they were not compelled to receive it; for if they did not receive the Gospel, nor obey it, the wrath of God was revealed upon them from Heaven.

And if the World did not receive the Gospel, which Christ sent his Disciples into all Nations to Preach, then God would Judge the world by the Man Christ Jesus, according to the Gospel the Power of God, which had been preached to them; and God would render Vengeance in flames of Fire, unto all them that did not receive and obey the Gospel; and that was Punishment enough.

And you may read in the *Revelations*, what *John* the Divine tells you, *what became of the Devil, that gave Power to the Beast, that compell'd to Worship, and the Whore that drunk the Blood of the Saints, and made War with them*, doth not he tell you, *That they shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, that burns with Brimstone, and that the Whore's Flesh shall be Burnt*?

And doth not Christ tell you, that he is the Seeds-man, *And after the good Seed was sown the Enemy sowed his Tares, and they that had that Sight as to discern the Tares from the Wheat, and saw both come up, went to the Lord, and would have had a License from him to go and pluck up the Tares; but the Lord's answer was no, lest they plucked up the Wheat also, but let them both grow together till the Harvest, and the Harvest is the End of the World.* And then, saith Christ, *I will send my Angels, who shall gather the Wheat into the Garner, and the Tares into bundles, and cast them into the Fire to be burnt.*

So you may see Christ gave no Commission to Men, to gather the Wheat or the Tares, but it was the Angels work to gather the Wheat into the Garner, and the Tares into bundles for the Fire.

And

And therefore they that go to gather either, have no Commission from Christ; for he gave them a Caution, *Lest ye also gather the Wheat with the Tares*, and lest their Zeal should Blind them.

So men are to mind their duty, which is to love Mercy and to do Justly, and to walk Humbly with God: And not to take the Angels work upon them, and go to Reaping before the time, which is the End of the World.

And likewise when Christ sent forth some of his Disciples, to prepare for him, and some would not receive them; *Lord*, said they, *Shall we command Fire to come down from Heaven to consume them, as* Elias *the Prophet did*?

Christ turned about, and rebuked his Disciples, and told them, *They did not know of what Spirit they were of*: And told them, *He did not come to destroy mens Lives, but to save them.*

So ye may see here, the Disciples of Christ had a Zeal, and would have had Fire to have come down from Heaven, to have Consumed them that would not receive Christ: These Disciples would have been plucking up Tares, but Christ rebuked them and stopt them; and told them, *They did not know of what Spirit they were of, that would have commanded Fire to come down from Heaven, to have consumed them that would not receive him.*

And now do all you that have Persecuted, Imprisoned, and spoiled the Goods of the People of God in *Christendom*, because they would not conform to your Religion, know what Spirit you are of your selves? And they that do not know what Spirit they are of themselves, must be in the blind Zeal, and will be doing that which Christ Rebukes; and they that do not know what Spirit they are of themselves, are not like to watch for Peoples Soules.

And People are not like to trust their Bodies, muchless their Souls into the Hands of such, that know not what Spirit they are of themselves.

And therefore consider what Spirit ye & they have been of, that have Persecuted, put to Death, spoiled the Goods & Imprisoned such as would not conform to your Way and Worship;

and

and yet call your ſelves Chriſtians, and Miniſters of Chriſt.

I ſay, Chriſt who rebuked his Diſciples, who would have had Fire to come down from Heaven, upon them that would not receive him, will rebuke you alſo.

And as Chriſt told his Diſciples, *They did not know what Spirit they were of*, ; neither do ye know what Spirit ye have been of: And mark, there were more in the Apoſtles Deſire, to have Fire come down from Heaven to Conſume them that would not receive the Subſtance, the Lord of Glory, then for you to Force, Impriſon, Perſecute, Baniſh, or Put to Death, or Spoil the Goods of ſuch as will not receive your Way, and Worſhip, and Religion, that you have ſet up. So, how can you but expect a greater Rebuke to come upon you, that perſecute and deſtroy ſuch as will not receive your Forms of Religion and Worſhip, when they were rebuked that would have Fire to come down to deſtroy them that would not receive Chriſt, the Subſtance and the Life?

For they were told by Chriſt, *They did not know what Spirit they were of*, and that *he came not to deſtroy Mens Lives, but to ſave them.*

And therefore conſider how many mens Lives have been deſtroyed ſince the Apoſtle dayes by them that profeſs themſelves *Chriſtians* in *Chriſtendom*, becauſe they would not receive their Religions and Wayes: they that have done ſo, have not known of what Spirit they are of, nor followed the Mind of Chriſt, to ſave mens Lives; and do not know what Spirit they are of, that would deſtroy mens Lives.

So weigh and conſider this all People in the whole World, that profeſs God and Chriſt, now in this the Day of your Viſitation.

G. F.

THE END.